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India: Identity documents required to obtain employment and housing in Delhi, Mumbai and Chandigarh; whether individuals must present themselves at police stations to obtain identity documents; issuance procedures for ration cards, birth certificates, driver's licenses, and voter cards

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Identity documents required to obtain employment and housing

An official at the High Commission of India in Ottawa explained, in correspondence with the Research Directorate, that there is no standard document that is used to verify the identity of those wishing to obtain employment and housing in Delhi, Mumbai and Chandigarh (7 April 2011). In regard to employment, he noted that the situation varies depending on whether the employer is private or government, and on which documents the applicant can provide (India 7 April 2011). The official stated that for private employers, identity documentation is "flexible;" it depends on "the policies of the concerned employer" (ibid.). He indicated that, for government employment, identity verification is conducted through the relevant police station (ibid.). During the criminal check process, the applicant is not required to report to the police station, but the police make a home visit to the applicant (ibid.).

Whether the receipt of identity documents requires police involvement

The official stated that to obtain identity documents, such as voter cards, ration cards, driver's licences or birth certificates, the applicant is not required to go to the police station (ibid.). Similarly, the National Portal of India, a website providing information from multiple state and national government departments on Indian governmental services (India n.d.a), does not indicate that an applicant needs to go to the police as part of the standard procedures for obtaining ration cards, driver's licences and birth certificates (India n.d.b; ibid. n.d.c; ibid. n.d.d). However, for cases in which a birth was not registered within the required 21-day period, issuance of the birth certificate involves police verification (ibid.).

Procedures to obtain ration cards

The National Portal of India indicates that ration cards are issued by state governments to allow families to purchase essential goods at subsidized prices (India n.d.b.). Ration cards can be issued to families who are above the poverty line, as well to those who are below it (ibid.). Families below the poverty line are

entitled to "Blue Cards," which allow them special subsidies (ibid.). Temporary ration cards may also be issued to provide relief for a specified time period (ibid.). In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, the official at the High Commission of India in Ottawa noted that ration cards are issued by state authorities in multiple languages and a variety of formats (India 15 Apr. 2011). Standard information on the ration card typically includes a photograph of the head of the family or a group family photograph, the total number of people in the family, as well as the name and age of each family member (ibid.).

Although procedures for obtaining ration cards vary across states, the National Portal of India lists the following general requirements:

- Application form
- Passport-sized photographs of the head of the family, with attestation by a gazetted officer, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Member of Parliament, or a municipal councillor
- Proof of residence
- surrender certificate of the previous ration card, if applicable (ibid. n.d.e).

The National Portal of India also notes that in cases in which an applicant does not have proof of residence, a registration official will conduct spot checks of the address and take statements from two neighbours (ibid.).

Delhi

In Delhi, applicants apply for ration cards at what is called a "Circle Office" (ibid. n.d.e). Proof of residence documents accepted in Delhi include a registration deed, allotment letter, power of attorney, house tax receipt, no objection certificate (NOC) of landlord or "any other relevant document" (ibid.). As with the general requirements, officials conduct interviews with neighbours when the applicant does not have documents to prove residence (ibid.).

Maharashtra

The Food and Civil Supply Department of the Maharashtra state government is the delegated authority for issuing ration cards in that state; Mumbai is located in Maharashtra (India n.d.f). According to the National Portal of India, an applicant applies to his or her local rationing office (ibid.). There are 42 such offices in the Mumbai and Thane region of Maharashtra (ibid.). Proof of residence documents accepted by Maharashtra state authorities include a house rental receipt, a bank book, an electricity or telephone bill, a driver's licence, an identity card, a government-issued allotment letter, or a rental agreement (ibid.). In addition, applicants must provide a copy of their child's birth certificate to add their child to the ration card (ibid.). They are also required to provide an affidavit stating that they do not already possess a ration card (ibid.).

Punjab and Haryana

Punjab issues ration cards through the Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs (India n.d.g), whereas Haryana issues ration cards through the Inspector, Food and Civil Supplies (India n.d.h). Both Punjab and Haryana state authorities require a group family photograph instead of an individual photograph of the head of household (ibid.; ibid. n.d.g). Punjab authorities

specify that they require three passport-sized photographs, verification of the photographs by the Sarpanch, Panch, municipal corporation (MC) or any gazetted officer, and a surrender certificate for the previous ration card (ibid.). Without providing specific details, Haryana state authorities indicate that they require proof of residence, "[p]roof of members on an affidavit" and "[v]erification proof from the Patwari/MC" (India n.d.h).

Birth certificates

The National Portal of India indicates that it is mandatory under Indian law to register all births within 21 days of the event (India n.d.d). The Registration of Births and Deaths Act of 1969 is the law governing birth registration in India (ibid.; US n.d.). According to information about India on the United States (US) Department of State's country reciprocity schedule, prior to 1970, reporting births was voluntary in India (ibid.). The State Department also states that there is no standard birth certificate format throughout India; certificates are often obtained from municipal and rural registrars, which fall under the domain of state laws (US n.d.). The official at the High Commission of India in Ottawa also noted that the format for birth certificates varies widely across India (India 15 Apr. 2011). He stated that standard information on Indian birth certificates typically includes the date of birth, the name of the father and mother, and the sex of the child (ibid.). The name of the child on the birth certificate is not mandatory and may be added sometime after the birth (ibid.).

Currently, India has a central Registrar General as well as state-, district- and town-level registrars (India n.d.d). There is a prescribed form to register a birth. The registration authorities issue the birth certificate after verifying the information with the corresponding hospital (ibid.).

Delhi

According to the National Portal of India, in Delhi, birth certificates are issued within seven days of application if the birth has been registered (India n.d.i). The birth certificates are issued by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) or the Delhi Cantonment Board (ibid.). In Delhi, registration of home births is facilitated by vaccinators, vaccination centres, primary health centres, dispensaries and mother and child welfare centres (ibid.).

Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, birth certificates are issued by the Municipal Corporation or Municipal Council in cities, by the Tehsildar in rural areas and by the Gram Panchayat Office in villages (India n.d.j). In urban areas, applicants submit forms containing court fee stamps to the appropriate office (ibid.). Applicants in rural areas can submit a written request instead of using a form (ibid.).

Chandigarh

In Chandigarh, applicants can obtain their birth certificate from the Office of Registrar or Sampark Centres (India n.d.k). Sampark Centres, which provide services of multiple Chandigarh departments under one roof (India n.d.p), receive birth information from the Chandigarh Health Department twice a month (ibid. n.d.k). To receive the birth certificate, applicants must complete a

prescribed form and pay a fee (ibid.).

Driver's Licences

The official at the High Commission of India indicated that the format of driving licences vary widely across India; some states use smart cards, while others issue paper licences (India 15 Apr. 2011). Information typically found on a driver's licence includes the person's name, address, photograph, and date of birth, the licence's date of issue and period of validity, and the type of vehicle that the individual is authorized to drive (ibid.).

The National Portal of India indicates that there are two types of driver's licences in India: a learner's licence, which is valid for six months, and a permanent licence (India n.d.c). The minimum age at which a person can receive a learner's licence is 16 years, while the minimum age for a permanent licence is 18 years (ibid.). To obtain a learner's licence, an applicant must submit a completed form, passport-sized photographs, proof of age and residence and a declaration of medical fitness (ibid.). The applicant must also pay a fee and pass a learner's test (ibid.). To obtain a permanent license, the applicant must apply after 30 but within 180 days of receiving the learner's license (ibid.) The applicant must also pass a road test (ibid.).

Delhi

In Delhi, applicants applying for a learner's driving permit must provide a completed application form, passport-sized photographs, a self-declaration of medical fitness, and documents proving residence and age (India n.d.l). According to the National Portal of India, one of the following documents may be used to prove residence:

- Ration card
- Life Insurance Policy . . .
- Voter Identity card
- Pay slip issued by any office in the Central/State or a local body
- Post office or Bank Pass Book indicating residential address
- House tax receipt
- House allotment letter issued by Estate Officer or DDA [Delhi Development Authority] etc.
- Certificate from employer in case of Government Servant
- Accident Life Insurance Policy
- Marriage certificate issued by designated Magistrate
- Income tax Returns
- Residence Certificate issued by the District Administration (India n.d.l)

In addition, one of the following documents may be used to prove age:

- School certificate
- Passport
- Birth Certificate
- Certificate from Central/State Govt. or a local body

- Identity card/voter list
- PAN [Permanent Account Number] of Income
- Tax card
- Other authentic proof acceptable by MLO [Motor Licensing Officer] (ibid.)

Maharashtra

Similarly, the National Portal of India indicates that in Maharashtra, individuals applying for a learner's permit must submit a medical certificate, three passport-sized photographs, a fee, and proof of address and age (India n.d.m). The website does not specify which documents are accepted for proof of age and address (ibid.). According to the New Delhi-based *Hindustan Times*, in 2010 Maharashtra's transportation department stopped accepting affidavits from individuals as proof of address for a driver's licence (27 Mar. 2010). State officials quoted in the article indicated that some individuals received a driver's licence with false information by submitting an insurance policy and an affidavit confirming their address; they subsequently used the driver's licence to obtain other identity documents, such as passports and ration cards (*Hindustan Times* 27 Mar. 2010).

Chandigarh

In Chandigarh, individuals applying for a driver's licence need to provide a photograph of themselves; a medical certificate, which includes their blood group and a photograph attested by a doctor; and proof of age and residence documents (India n.d.n). Proof of residence documents include ID cards, ration cards, telephone bills, and electricity bills (ibid.). If supported by an affidavit by a public notary or magistrate, a variety of other documents, such as a certificate from a student hostel, a marriage certificate, a residence certificate, a police report, a rental agreement, can be used to establish the applicant's address (ibid.).

Voter cards

The Election Commission of India (ECI) indicates that voter cards, known as Electors' Photo Identity Cards (EPICs), were created in 1993 "to improve the accuracy of the electoral roll and prevent electoral fraud" (India n.d.o). They were revised in 2000 to incorporate improved technological advancements (India n.d.o). The ECI reports that over 450 million EPICs have been distributed in India (ibid.). EPICs are issued by Electoral Registration Officers (EROs); they contain the following information: individual's name; name of father, mother, or husband; date of birth or age on the qualifying date; sex; address; and photograph (India 2008, 69). The EPIC also contains a security hologram partially over the photograph; the reverse side of the EPIC contains the voter's address and a facsimile signature of the ERO issuing the card (ibid.). (An approved sample of an EPIC that was taken from the 2008 *Hand Book for Electoral Registration Officers* is included with this Response.) Individuals who are issued EPICs must show their cards to vote (ibid.). Each EPIC has a unique number consisting of three letters, specific for each assembly constituency, followed by seven numerals (ibid., 70). According to the ECI, it is not necessary to have a ration card in order to register in the electoral roll and receive an EPIC (India n.d.q). However, having some form of proof of residence helps facilitate the verification process (ibid.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR), European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), United Nations Refworld.

Attachment

India. 2008. Election Commission of India (ECI). "Annexure 9.1, Chapter IX, Para 1." *Hand Book for Electoral Registration Officers*. 1 page. <http://eci.nic.in/eci_main/ElectoralLaws/HandBooks/ERO_HANDBOOK.pdf> [Accessed 12 Apr. 2011]

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